

ARTDOC

Photography Magazine

Where is Paradise?

Charlotte Schmitz
Take me to Jermamy

Tim Franco
North Korean Defectors

Simon Norfolk
Geological layers

Content

Portfolio

Simon Norfolk Geological layers as human history	6.
Max Cabello Orcasitas Mass graves in the Andes	42.
Tim Franco Portraits of North Korean Defectors	60.
Charlotte Schmitz Take me to Jermamy	70.
Sébastien Cuvelier Where is Paradise?	86.

Photo Culture

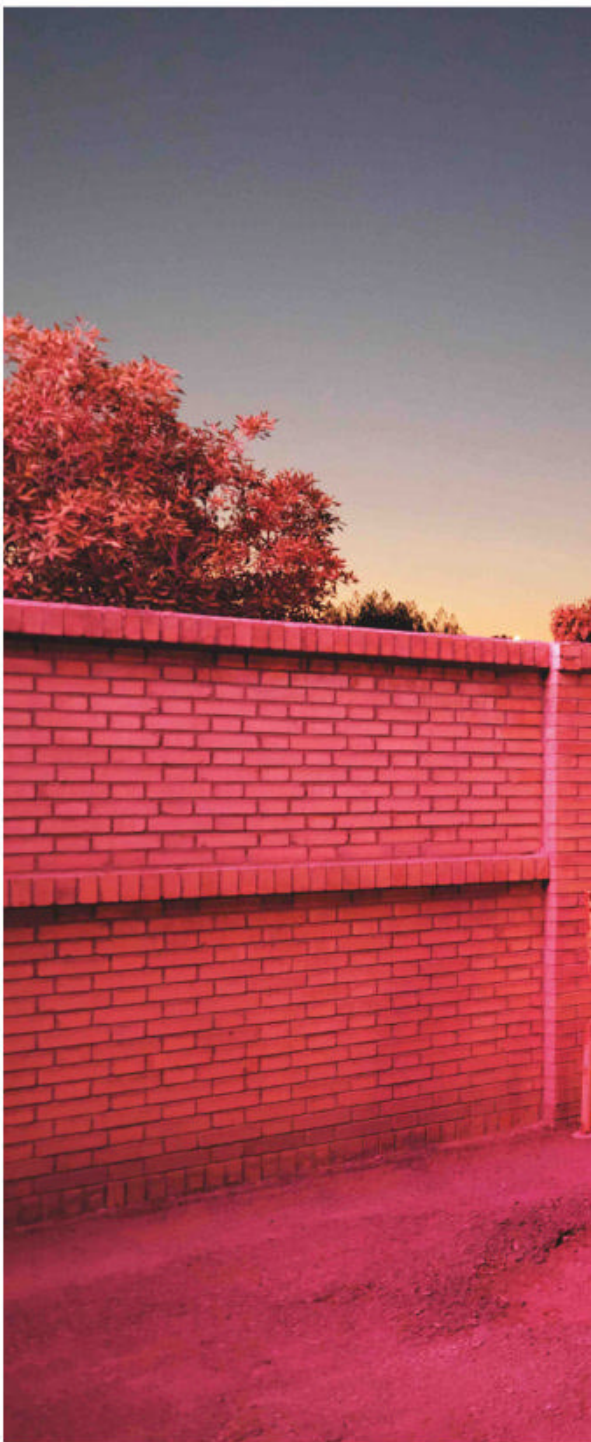
Why Art Photography? An examination of the different contexts in which photography operates as art.	26.
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Inspiration

Lisa Mazzei Country Mysteries	20.
Vaune Trachtman Now is Always	54.
Daphne Kotsiani After Echo	80.

Photo Books	36.
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Narrative Portraits Highlights of Artdoc Photo Exhibition	38.
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© Sébastien Cuvelier



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© Max Cabello Orcasitas

“In many parts of
the world, humans
are looking for
a better life in
political freedom,
social justice, and
happiness.

- The Artdoc Team

Quest for a better life

Dear Reader,

In many parts of the world, humans are looking for a better life in political freedom, social justice, and happiness. This is certainly true for the North-Korean defectors, portrayed by the American photographer Tim Franco, residing and working in Seoul. Franco photographed them with an old polaroid camera to create a worn-out look. A similar technique was deployed by German photographer Charlotte Schmitz. She used polaroids as well to capture images of the refugees who arrived at the Greek islands. She added an informative feature to the portraits, asking refugees to write their stories on the Polaroids.

In Peru, mass graves were dug up, and Max Cabello Orcasitas captured the grief of the survivors of the battles between the government and the Shining Path. The villagers all wanted their painful stories to be told.

Humanity, amidst turmoil and hardships, is always craving for paradise, but where can we find it? Belgian photographer Sébastien Cuvelier found an area of the utopian search in the outskirts of Teheran but realised it looked like a desolated habitat on Mars. Paradise, he discovered, was a typical Iranian concept, meaning a walled garden. Is that what mankind is inherently looking for?

Threats do not merely come from politics and wars. The global threat to an eligible paradise originates in our climate. British photographer Simon Norfolk showed the pathetic battle against global warming in the remnants of Swiss glaciers, where entrepreneurs draped blue sheets over their ice-grottos.

All these photo projects, documentary in style, belong by now to the realm of art photography. London based artist, critic and art historian Lucy Souter examines in her book *Why Art Photography* in which different contexts photography operates as art. She emphasises that the context in which photography is presented is as important as the final print.

- The Artdoc Team



© Simon Norfolk | Shroud, in collaboration with Klaus Thymann

Geological layers as human history

Simon Norfolk

Serene, mysterious and melancholy sheets are draped over ice in the Alpine mountains. The morbid scene seems like a graveyard for the last glaciers of the world, the final remnants of the Anthropocene. The shrouds are dramatically lit in the gloomy dusk emphasizing the eerie atmosphere. The project *Shroud* by the prolific British photographer Simon Norfolk emerges organically from his earlier works in which the passing of time, captured in an archaeological way, is the leading motive.

Shroud is a project about an attempt to preserve an ice-grotto tourist attraction at the Rhône Glacier. Local Swiss entrepreneurs wrapped a significant section of the ice-body in thermal blankets. The photos Simon Norfolk took of the blankets have a mysterious atmosphere as signs of a geographical funeral. “The way I photographed them emphasized the way the ice-blankets looked like marble tombs. I wanted it to look like Carrara marble, like Michelangelo’s Peter Pietà in the Vatican. That was the kind of inspiration and the leading metaphor for the whole project. I lit the cloths from above. A giant helium balloon was carrying the flash, and so we could exactly produce the flashlight at the right angle. With this light, you can see every ripple in the cloth, which is what I wanted to show.”

In this project, Simon Norfolk collaborated with the Danish environmentalist, activist, photographer and creative director Klaus Thymann and his organization ‘Project Pressure’. The title *Shroud* refers to the melting glacier under its death cloak. Norfolk: “The blankets were completely battered by the weather; it looked like the glacier was being made ready for its own funeral.”

Melting glacier

The Rhône Glacier is continually sliding downhill and melting every spring. Every year the entrepreneurs have to dig another grotto for their tourist attraction. Simon Norfolk explains: “They take another underground tunnel and charge seventy Swiss francs for entry. The entrepreneurs have done this business for over a hundred years, but in the last thirty years, the glacier has kind of disappeared from view.

They had to try and preserve the grotto. So, they put blankets over the cave to reduce the melting of the ice. To replace the blankets every year costs ninety thousand Swiss francs. You need a helicopter to get the material on the glacier. But it’s worthwhile for them, financially, because they have tourists paying to go inside the glacier.”

Norfolk didn’t think it was important to show the glacier’s disappearance in his project because everybody already knows that, and he had done it before in his project *When I am laid in Earth*. “I think the interesting thing now is not to talk about places that are disappearing. We need to talk about what on earth we are going to do about it. What is going to be the cost? Wealthy countries will probably be able to address these problems. We will build higher sea walls, and we will have electric cars. But in developing countries like India and Brazil, that will not be affordable. It’s kind of cynical.”

Pyrographs

The project *When I am laid in Earth* by Simon Norfolk was also made in collaboration with Project Pressure. For this project, he photographed pyrographs, fire lines that he drew on the Lewis Glacier of Mt Kenya. The pyrographs represent the front of the glacier at various times in the recent past. This project was a new development in the work of Norfolk because his earlier work had warfare as the central theme, and this was his first project with the environment as the theme. “It was not a big rupture. I invented the pyrographs three years before because I had the idea to draw borders where the fighting was in Sarajevo, but it didn’t work there.



© Simon Norfolk | Shroud (in collaboration with Klaus Thymann)

But now, I could quickly adapt it to this project.” In his previous work, Norfolk had focused on ruins as witnesses of the passing of time, and in this project, he could recognize the glaciers as geological ruins. “As soon as I realised that it wasn’t just about disappearing ice, but about photographing ruins, I could give it a go.” The organization Project Pressure provided the scientific data. “The entire scientific part

of the job was handled by Klaus Thymann, so I could say with confidence that the borders of the glaciers were indeed where he calculated them.” The fire lines looking like magma are appropriate tools linking it to the fossil fuels, the main cause of climate change. Norfolk wrote about his pyrographs on his website: “The ‘Fire vs Ice’ metaphor I employ is especially delicious for me. My fire is, by design, made from petroleum.”





© Simon Norfolk | When I am laid in Earth



© Simon Norfolk | When I am laid in Earth

Destructive energy

Another intriguing project Simon Norfolk developed is *Full Spectrum Dominance*, a project about rockets, missiles and satellites. This is one of his previous projects that have warfare as the central theme. Norfolk photographed rockets, engines and actual launching of missiles in the night. The first answer to what aroused his interest in these mass killing weapons is short, puzzling and surprising: “I was interested in the energy.” But when Norfolk elaborates more on the background of the launching pictures, it becomes clear what he means to say. “I left the camera for two hours, resulting in the exposure of the night sky and the stars, and then suddenly across the night sky

comes that missile like a scratch, with the energy at the launch. This jet engine rocket comes across the sky like a knife scraping across the cosmos. I was not interested in the rocket and all the smoke, but the energy people put into this. It looks like a neutral thing but is a very destructive energy. It is a rocket that can kill millions of people. There are ten or more nuclear weapons aboard the device. There has never been a more destructive capacity in a weapon in human history. What I find intriguing is the intellectual storage which is inside that thing, used only for destruction. At the same time, there is no cure for cancer and no clean drinking water for many. All great scientists are busy working on nuclear



© Simon Norfolk | Afghanistan: Chronotopia

weapons. Inside the energy of that weapon is the lost hope of humanity, the things that we could have done instead. It is madness.”

Chronotopia

The conversation delves deeper into the works of Simon Norfolk, like an archaeological journey, and that is precisely the way he sees his work. “I feel more like an archaeologist than a photographer.” In maybe Norfolk’s most well-known project *Afghanistan: Chronotopia*, we see ruins of the war in Afghanistan: an old aeroplane, a Stonehenge-like pillar construction, bombed-out buildings, a completely destroyed district and a heap of cluster-bombs in the playground of an elementary

school. Which idea was behind this odd collection of war remnants of the many Afghan battlefields? A similar cryptic answer as before follows: “Paintings!” But immediately afterwards, Norfolk elaborately explains what he means by paintings. “The romantics understood the concept of the sublime: beauty of greatness combined with terror. The painters like Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin were the ones that painted these kinds of landscapes. When I saw the aircraft of Ariana, the Afghan Airlines, in this high grass, I suddenly had the idea of how to photograph Afghanistan. When you see the ruins of war, you understand the metaphor of the passing of time. The ruins are the traces of time.”

Metaphors

The question that arises is: are the ruins metaphors for the war or metaphors for the passing of time? The answer is a mix of both. “I have always been interested in archeology. I see my job as a photographer is much more archaeological. My job is go to the landscape and brush through the dirt and pull something out. What appealed to me about Afghanistan was that it was so clear where the fighting had taken place and the different technologies in the different areas of the war because the war was so long. You could see where the Russians had fought just using tanks, and you could see where the Mujahideen had fought, just using Kalashnikovs. And then, across the

road, you could see where the Americans had dropped a bomb. Every one of these different technologies left behind a different crime scene, a different kind of forensics. So, it seemed to me that the history was like archaeological strata, like layers of time laying on top of each other. Afghanistan was like a landslide where suddenly land fell away and you could see exposed all these layers. You could see the castle that was built by Genghis Khan and British fortress of 1870 and you could see where the Mujahideen built their embankments in the 1990s; and you could see where the Americans dropped a bomb with a F16. And all of those pieces of evidence, all of those archaeological artefacts, all of this



© Simon Norfolk | Afghanistan: Chronotopia



© Simon Norfolk | Afghanistan: Chronotopia

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I have always been interested in archeology. I see my job as a photographer is much more archaeological.



crime scene evidence was lying in the landscape, waiting to be picked out by an archaeologist. To me, that's the most magical thing about photography; it is that kind of archaeological process of pulling stuff out of the landscape and saying, look, from this little piece of evidence, I can tell you something about how they lived. Human memory is incredibly slippery and unreliable, but landscape itself holds these truths more reliably than any human."

Aesthetics and politics

As an artist, Simon Norfolk has a clearly defined idea of the relation between aesthetic and politics. The short version of his vision: "Photography is art and politics at the same time." Hereafter an elaboration follows: "Beauty as a vehicle to show what you want to show, is essential. Beauty is a tactic, a kind of honey. The aesthetic part, which some photographers might try to avoid, is essential, not essential as the message itself, but essential as a piece of art. Because it's art. It's not a thesis that you write for a university. And for art, you've got to build an audience. So, for me, the first task is always making my work beautiful and seductive. If the work is just a theory or is very painfully politically aware or is very boring, then you're just talking to yourself." In the end, for Norfolk, politics is much more important than aesthetics: "I don't even like photography very much. I am not in love with photography," he remarks

briefly, and adds: "I certainly don't like photography with a capital P, but I think if I was clever enough to work out a better way of talking about the things that I want to talk about, if I could do this through grand opera or poetry or I could write the great Afghan War novel, or I could write poetry about war experiences, the way British soldiers were about their experiences in the First World War, or if I was a filmmaker or if I was a playwright, if I was clever enough, I could come up with a way of talking about these things that would be better and more effective."

The photographer is, in fact, a visual storyteller. He uses photography as a vehicle to reach his audience. "For me, photography is just a method of talking about politics. I want to tell the stories that are not told in the newspapers, like *The New York Times* or *The Guardian*. I like to photograph what the Afghan farmer is doing instead of showing what American soldiers are doing. That has always been important to me. I don't believe in observing and just collecting pictures. Why would you just take 'objective' pictures? We need great metaphors and good opinions. We don't need more information but a good filter of that information, to select what is important. I am not politically neutral, because that is pointless. If I could find a better way of talking about it, I'd become a playwright, opera singer, musician, or something. But right now, photography is the best thing I've got."

About

Simon Norfolk (Born: 1963 in Lagos, Nigeria) is a landscape photographer whose work over twenty years has been themed around a probing and stretching of the meaning of the word 'battlefield' in all its forms. As such, he has photographed in some of the world's worst war-zones and refugee crises, but is equally at home photographing supercomputers used to design military systems or the test-launching of nuclear missiles. Time's layeredness in the landscape is an ongoing fascination of his.



“When you see the
ruins of war, you
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passing of time.

Country Mysteries

Lisa Mazzei





© Lisa Mazzei | Country Mysteries

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Country Mysteries comes from the need to tell about the echoes of the places I belong through a subjective interpretation that evokes the charm and mystery of the rural places. This story develops through the images of the Italian countryside where I come from, the Garfagnana valley, an area located in the northern part of Tuscany. Latching on to the cinematographic and literary tradition that combines liminal places and mystery novels, *Country Mysteries* turns into a contemporary narrative that puts together cinematic staged photography and documentation

of everyday mystery, subjective and objective points of view.

A mystery, living for centuries in the woods and the mountains, permeates the landscape. The young protagonists of this story try to understand the enigmatic language of the rural scenery and face the impossibility of communicating with it. The subjects seem to be immortalized in a situation of apparent stillness when the action turns into an external and internal investigation. *Country Mysteries* is a path between fiction and reality, identity and territory.





© Lisa Mazzei | Country Mysteries



© Lisa Mazzei | Country Mysteries



© Lisa Mazzei | Country Mysteries

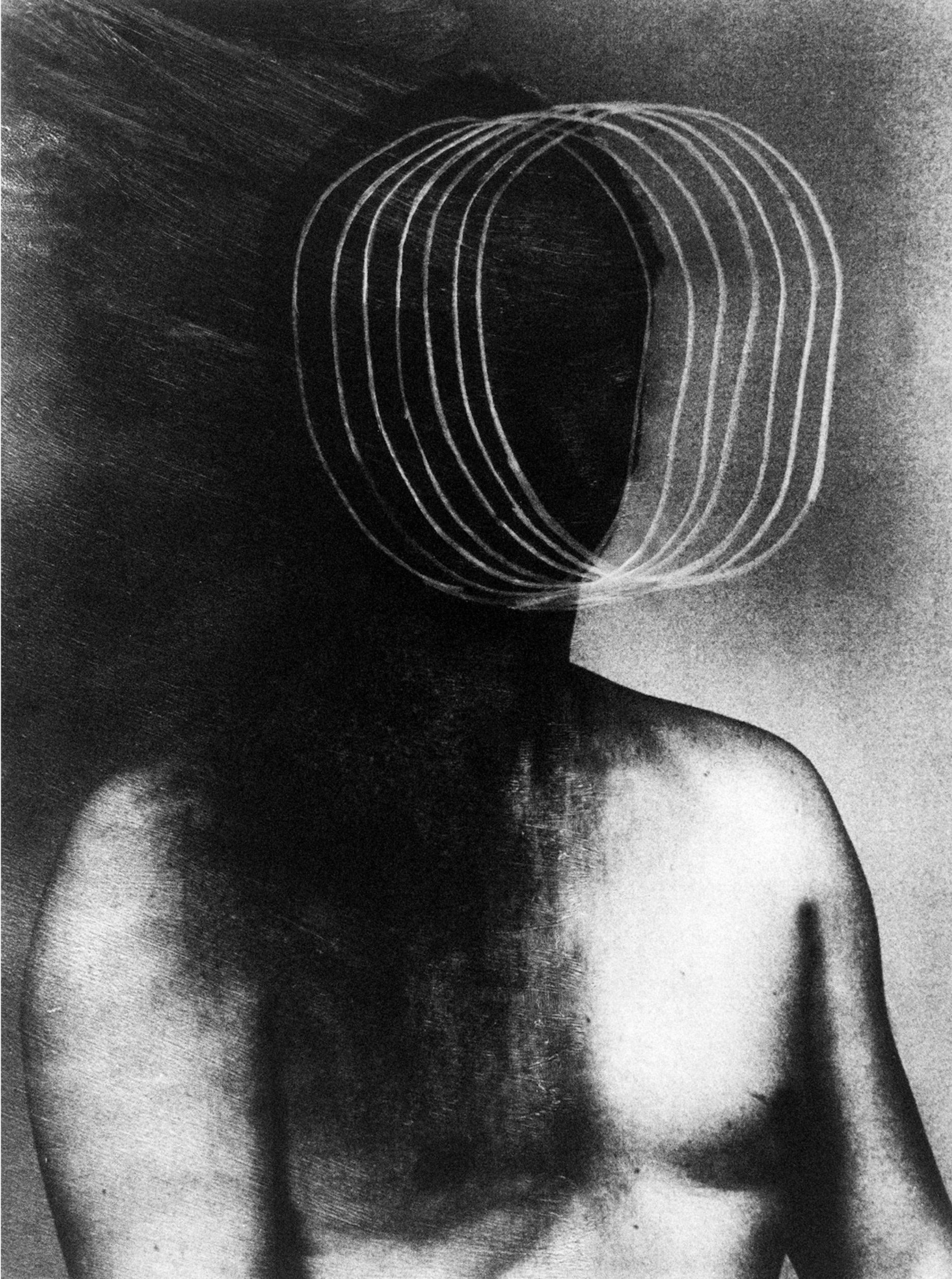
About

Lisa Mazzei (1998, Barga) is an Italian photographer from Tuscany. She started as a self-taught astrophotographer and landscape photographer in her rural town in 2016. She graduated in Graphic Design and Visual Communication in Florence, where she studied photography and contemporary art. She currently works as a freelance graphic designer, illustrator and photographer.

Why Art Photography?

Words by ■ Lucy Souter

Contemporary art photography is paradoxical. Anyone can look at it and form an opinion about what they see. Yet it usually represents aesthetic and theoretical positions that only a small minority of well-informed viewers can access. This introduction, taken from the book *Why Art Photography*, examines the different contexts in which photography operates as art. This text questions the purpose of art photography as described by critics and art historians. Although necessary for understanding the field, these issues are rarely discussed directly in texts on photography.



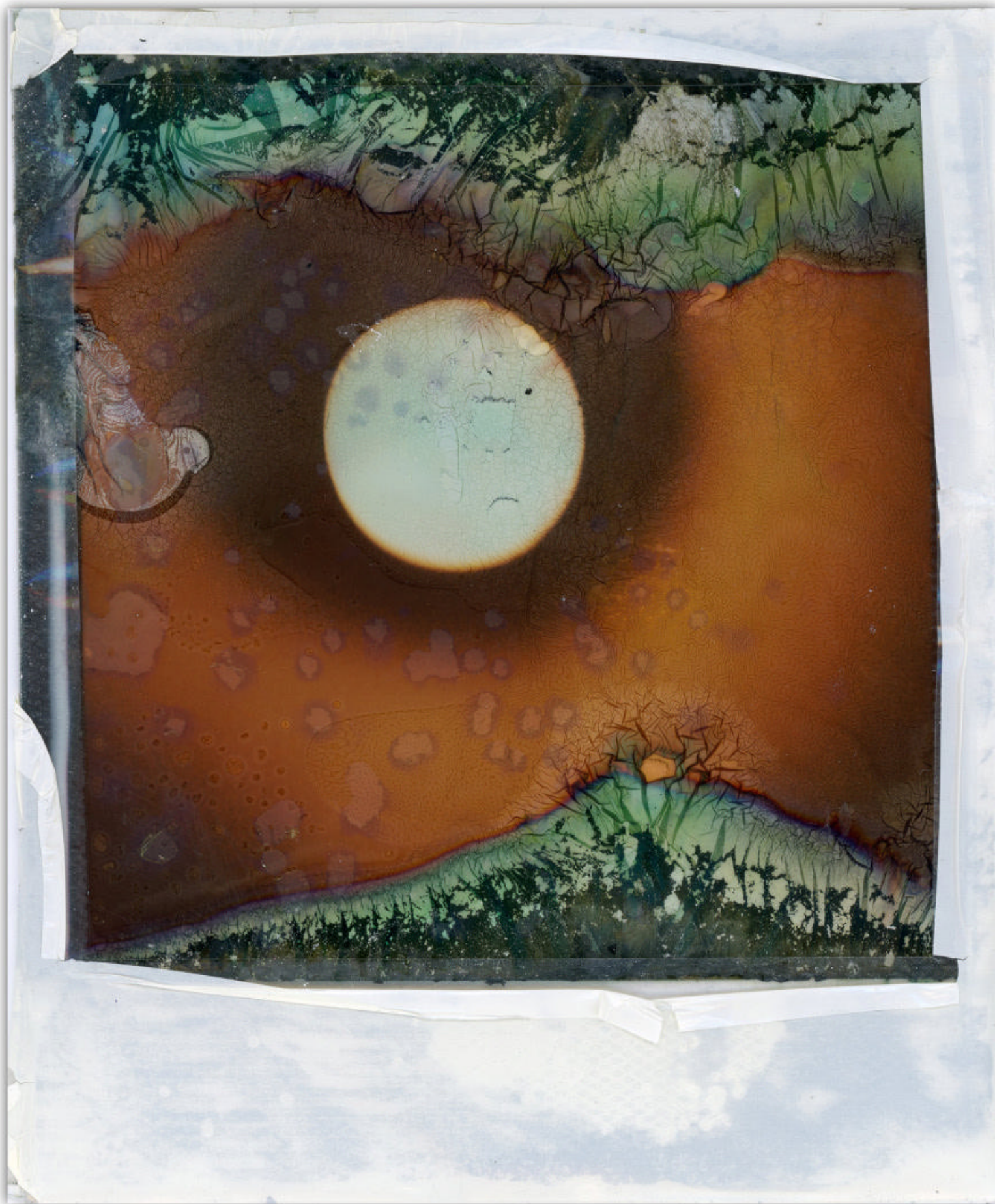
Contemporary art photography has a number of tangled strands that are difficult to tease apart and often overlap in the work of a single image-maker. The different practices are categorized partly by the way they look and also by the constantly shifting ways they are framed by language and institutions. As with all other forms of art, the chief characteristics that define art photography are the intentions of the maker, its similarities to other forms of art and the context in which it is presented. The distinction between art photography and photography-as-art has now largely collapsed, but it is still useful to identify some of the different ways in which photographers have engaged with the idea of art historically, as they provide points of reference for many of the works that will be discussed in the following chapters. Since the 1830s, photographs have been made by established and aspiring artists who have attempted to make them look like art and placed them into art contexts. One of the most basic strategies for photographers wanting their work to be read as art has been the use of traditional genres from painting, including portraiture, the nude, landscape and still life. The term “genre” refers not only to subject matter but also to a set of pictorial conventions that allow audiences to recognize a particular type of image as art. Would-be art photographers in the nineteenth century also concerned themselves with many of the same debates that preoccupied painters, around issues such as beauty and truth. Artistic subject matter and elevated ideas were not enough in themselves to validate photography as an art form. Throughout the twentieth century, a small but steady procession of photographers, curators and critics on both

sides of the Atlantic wrote persuasive essays on the subject. In the USA, this strand of modernist practice was spearheaded by Alfred Stieglitz and came to be known as fine art photography or simply art photography.*1

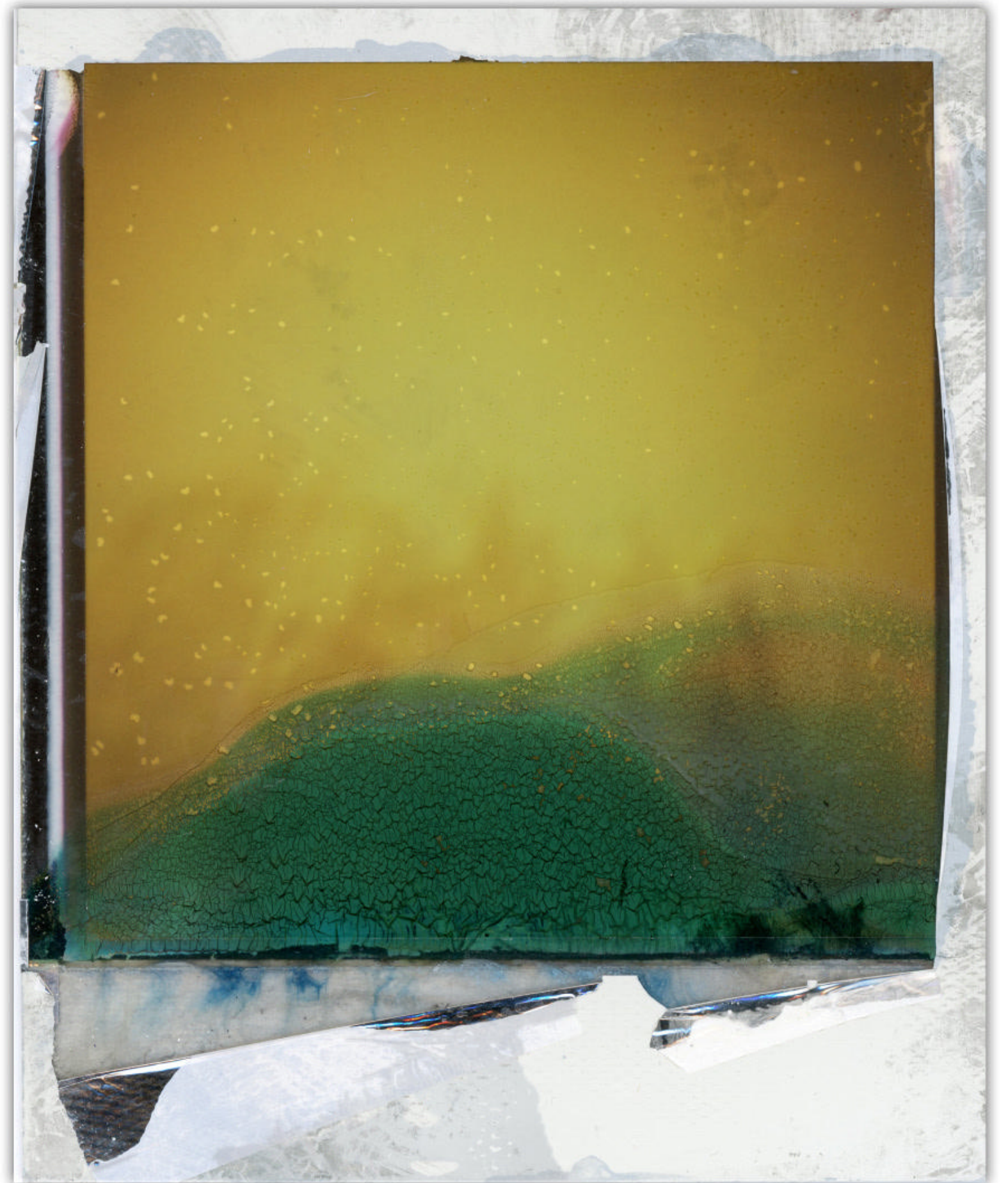
In fine art photography, subjects from the most exalted to the most banal are transformed into pictures via the special properties of the photographic medium. This mode usually privileges the sensibility of the individual photographer, his or her own unique vision. Some photographers still work proudly within this modernist tradition, placing an emphasis on the formal and expressive properties of their images and the technical excellence of their prints.*2 When images originally made for some other purposes are drawn into an art context, it is often because they are seen as overlapping with the values of fine art photography.

Bauhaus

While some art photographers have focused on photography as medium, many artists using photography have felt no need to isolate it as a separate form or activity. In Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, photography was part of a larger explosion of creative experimentation. Surrealists such as Man Ray or Hans Bellmer mixed photography with painting, printmaking and sculpture, creating single images, collages and composites that challenged conventional art forms while also confronting the conventional manners and outlooks of their day. Some of the most important, influential artists to work with photography in the twentieth century have been opposed to the very notion of art, explicitly rejecting fine art traditions. The language associated



© Maie Wisur | Wastelands



© Maie Wisur | Wastelands

with photography by Soviet constructivist Aleksandr Rodchenko or Bauhaus instructor Laszlo Moholy-Nagy related to the medium's uniqueness, modernity and objectivity, rather than its merit as an art form. These avant-garde practitioners provide a touchstone for contemporary figures who prefer to frame themselves as artists using photography rather than as photographers.

Anti-aesthetic

The conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s embraced photography specifically because they did not associate it with art; they were looking for a kind of image that would be deliberately dull and ugly. If fine art photographers particularly value the

viewer's aesthetic experience of the work's visual form, conceptualists such as Joseph Kosuth, Robert Barry or John Baldessari asserted an anti-aesthetic in which form was secondary to idea-as-art. There is a vast, complex literature about the role of the aesthetic in art. A key issue for this book's discussion is whether the aesthetic should refer primarily to the satisfactions we obtain from the visual properties of work (sidelined in much concept-based art), or whether it might be extended to other aspects of the works, such as the way they inform, transform, reveal, challenge, etc. The latter view, that ideas themselves may have aesthetic merit, has been prevalent in ambitious contemporary art since the 1960s.*3



© Man Ray | Noire en Blanche, 1926

The artists and art historians who developed theories of postmodernism in the visual arts in the 1970s and 1980s followed in this path. Under the influence of German theorist Walter Benjamin and French post-structuralist theory, writers such as Craig Owens, Rosalind Krauss and Abigail Solomon-Godeau argued that the crucial task of art in the moment was to reflect back on the way that images make meaning.*4 As artist and writer Victor Burgin put it in his 1977 article, *Looking at Photographs*: “The photograph is a place of work, a structured

and structuring space within which the reader deploys, and is deployed by, what codes he or she is familiar with in order to make sense.”*5 Cut free of its modernist baggage, photography was seen as a perfect medium for enacting postmodern critiques of representation. Race, gender, sexuality, consumerism and various other cultural constructs came under scrutiny as part of this project. Work made with these ideas in mind asks viewers to develop a more active, combative relationship to official and commercial culture.

Postmodernism

Postmodern theories brought a new level of seriousness and academicism to the study of photography. There was also playfulness in the postmodern embrace of eclectic styles and genres and in the transgressive shock of appropriation - images stolen from the culture and re-presented as if in quotation marks. A market for modernist art photographs had begun to develop in the 1970s. Large, colourful, visually dramatic and expensively framed, the postmodern work of the 1980s fed an exponential rise in the prices of photography as an art form. At the same time there was a puritan aspect to postmodernism, a purging of the modernist values of originality and authenticity, accompanied by a rejection of preciousness, craft and markers of personal expression. Although many of them work exclusively with photographs, artists working in this mould are not generally referred to as photographers, a distinction that marks their distance from a fine art photography tradition. The labels of “artist” or “photographer” are constructed by institutions and academic discourse. They can be seen as a form of cynical branding but also have a certain usefulness; they give us a sense of context and allow us to consider how different works are intended to be read - even if we choose to read them otherwise.*6

Large-scale images

Another key development in art photography in the late twentieth century has been the rise of large-scale images offering hyper-detailed and seemingly neutral serial views of categories of people, places and things. Technically, this work involves both a step back to large-

format view cameras typical in the late nineteenth century and a step forward to the most state-of-the-art commercial printing and mounting facilities to produce images several metres across. Grounded in the influential teaching of Germans Bernd and Hilla Becher, these works are often discussed within the discourse of postmodernism. As we will see, there is debate as to whether images by Thomas Struth, Candida Höfer, Frank Breuer, etc., should be read in relation to modernist visuality, postmodern criticality or in other more layered ways.

While much photographic art made since the 1980s has been led by ideas, aspects of visual - and specifically photographic - pleasure have persisted. At the same time as Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine made use of appropriation, other practitioners, less resistant to the label “photographer,” were making work that explored issues around representation while also engaging with visual aspects of photographic aesthetics. Robert Mapplethorpe, for example, took advantage of the lyrical potential of platinum printing to address issues of sexual identity. Nan Goldin and Andres Serrano, among others, forged a new aesthetics for large-scale colour photography, using big grain and large areas of shiny darkness in previously unforeseen ways, underpinning confessional or shock-based content that transgressed cultural norms. Jeff Wall pioneered a new form within photography-as-art - the lightbox - to heighten the visual appeal of his large staged *tableaux*. This commercial form is far removed from the subtlety of traditional silver prints, yet Wall’s work builds on modernist ambitions in claiming a grandeur and seriousness for photographs as art objects. Wall is

interested in all the ways in which meaning can be constructed and communicated within photographs; he is also very much invested in the making of pictures. His conceptual framework for staging the photographs in relation to painting, social history and critical theory has allowed him to raise the production values of the work to commercial standards while projecting a sense of intellectual engagement.

The importance of context

The context of photographic work is just as important as its appearance or subject matter in determining how it will be understood. Photographs with a more formalist, modernist orientation tend to circulate in specialist photography galleries and fairs. The broader art world regards this photographic culture as somewhat insular and limited in outlook. A successful photographer who accrues critical attention and market value may graduate from an art- photography context to the institutions that exchange and promote photography within contemporary art, generally for higher prices. There is certainly overlap between the worlds, but distinctions remain. Whether fine art photographers, or contemporary artists using photography, the majority of practitioners discussed in this book are committed to photography as a serious field of enquiry, full of visual and intellectual satisfactions. They are united in regarding photography as a medium that is tied to the world but flexible in its relationship to appearances, and independent in its production of meaning. Throughout the book I will refer to these various strands of photographic practice with the umbrella term “art photography,” though I will occasionally return to the

distinctions between the different camps. The model of art photography I have set up is very Western and operates on a New York-London-Düsseldorf axis. This has been the main orientation of photographic institutions, markets and scholarship for the past three decades. Photographic aesthetics read differently depending on their cultural context. In eastern Europe under Communism, for example, a melancholic mode of black- and-white photography was coded as a form of resistance against an official aesthetic of socialist realism. Czech photographers such as Jan Svoboda worked this way in the 1960s and 1970s, drawing on both conceptual art and surrealism. A contemporary Czech photographer, Marketa Othova, draws on these precedents, and the style of her work would become difficult to read for viewers unfamiliar with a Czech context. In Japan, Iran, India or any number of other specific cultural contexts, photographic aesthetics have a life of their own. A mode of art photography that seems culturally exhausted in one place or at one moment may provide a unique way of communicating in another. Over the next decade, the conversation about art photography will become far more international. I predict, however, that many of its established terms and debates will continue to be important, even as they are transformed in various contexts.

Art values

In his 1985 book, *Patterns of Intention*, art historian Michael Baxendall provides an extremely eloquent rebuttal to the oversimplified economic analysis of art. I quote at length because the web of interconnecting motivations that he describes for the making of paintings



© Ilar Gunilla Persson | Castle of Air

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In fine art photography, subjects from the most exalted to the most banal are transformed into pictures via the special properties of the photographic medium.



has direct relevance for the discussion of photography as art: In the economists' market what the producer is compensated by is money: money goes one way, goods or services the other. But in the relation between paintings and cultures the currency is much more diverse than just money: it includes such things as approval, intellectual nurture and, later, reassurance, provocation and irritation of stimulating kinds, the articulation of ideas, vernacular visual skills, friendship and - very important indeed - a history of one's activity and a heredity, as well as sometimes money acting both as a token of some of these and a means to continuing performance. And the good exchanged for these is not so much pictures as profitable and pleasurable experience of pictures. The painter may choose to take more of one sort of compensation than of

another - more of a certain sense of himself within the history of painting, for instance, than of approval or money. The consumer may choose this rather than that sort of satisfaction. Whatever choice painter or consumer makes will reflect on the market as a whole. It is a pattern of barter, barter primarily of mental goods.*7

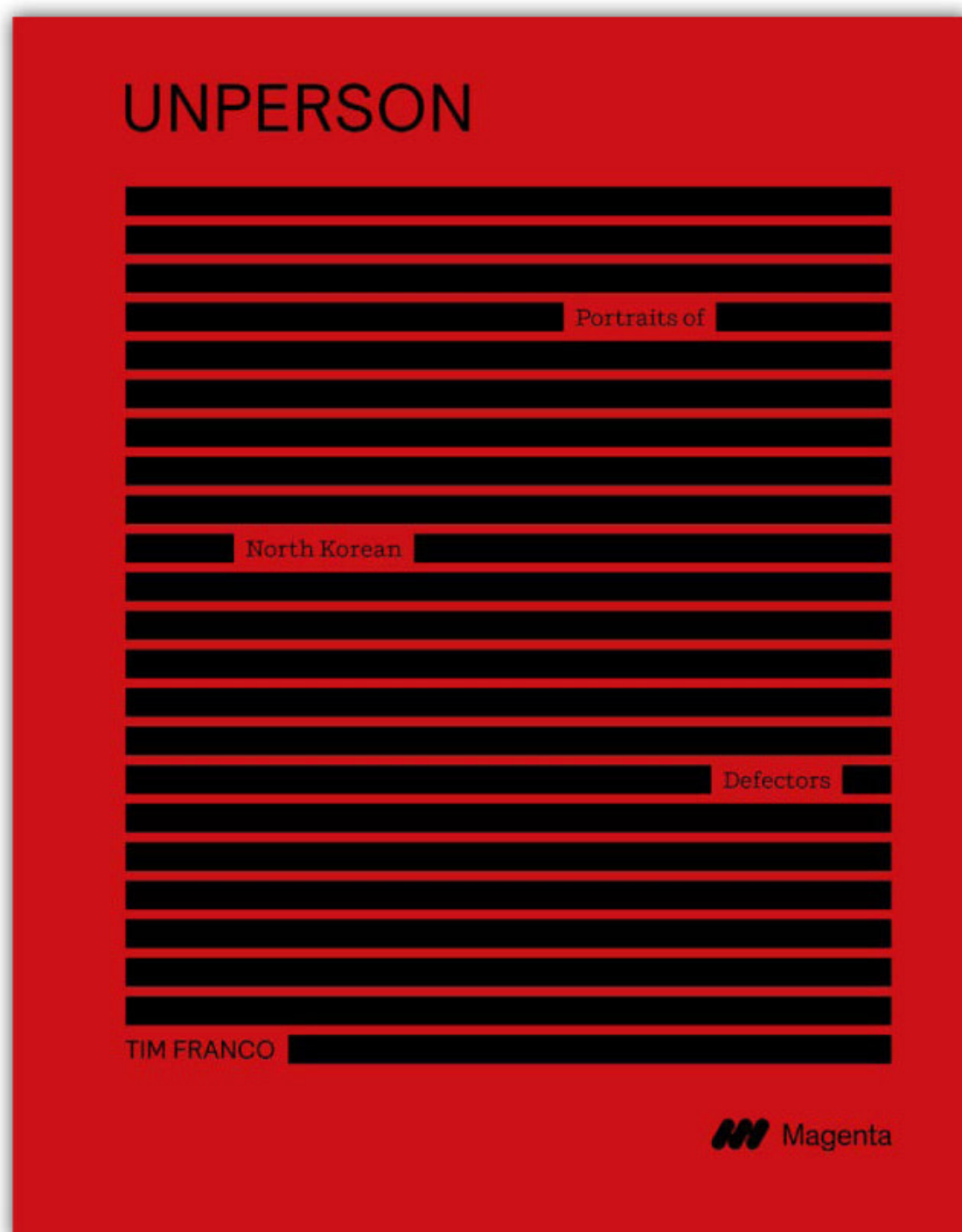
Of course, it is not only art that participates in this kind of significant, pleasurable system of mental barter. Some people spend their time thinking about poetry, ceramics, computer games or haircuts. To some extent, all of these cultural forms - along with handbags - can carry symbolic as well as exchange value, can relate both to everyday life and to abstract ideas and can employ appropriation, intertextuality and a mixing of high and low forms of culture. But do they do it as well as art photography?

Read more in the book *Why Art Photography?* by Lucy Soutter

Notes

1. Several early contributions to the art photography debate (including an essay by Alfred Stieglitz) can be found in Alan Trachtenberg, *Classic Essays on Photography* (Stony Creek, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980). There are many excellent histories of photography providing a broader context for this discussion. See, for example, Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Laurence King, 2010).
2. For recent texts particularly sympathetic to the formal, process-based and expressive aspects of photography, see Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009) and Christopher James, *The Book of Alternative Processes*, 2nd edn (New York: Delmar, 2008).
3. For an accessible discussion of the aesthetic in conceptual art, see Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens, "Aesthetics and Beyond," in *Who's Afraid of Conceptual Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 80-107.
4. This approach was exemplified by the critical essays collected in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984).
5. Victor Burgin, "Looking at Photographs," in Victor Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 153.
6. For a discussion of the construction of the term "art photography," see Alexandra Moschovi, "Changing Places: The Rebranding of Photography as Contemporary Art," in Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, eds., *Photography Between Art and Politics: The Critical Position of the Photographic Medium in Contemporary Art* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008), pp. 143-52.
7. Michael Baxendall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 48.

#Photo Books



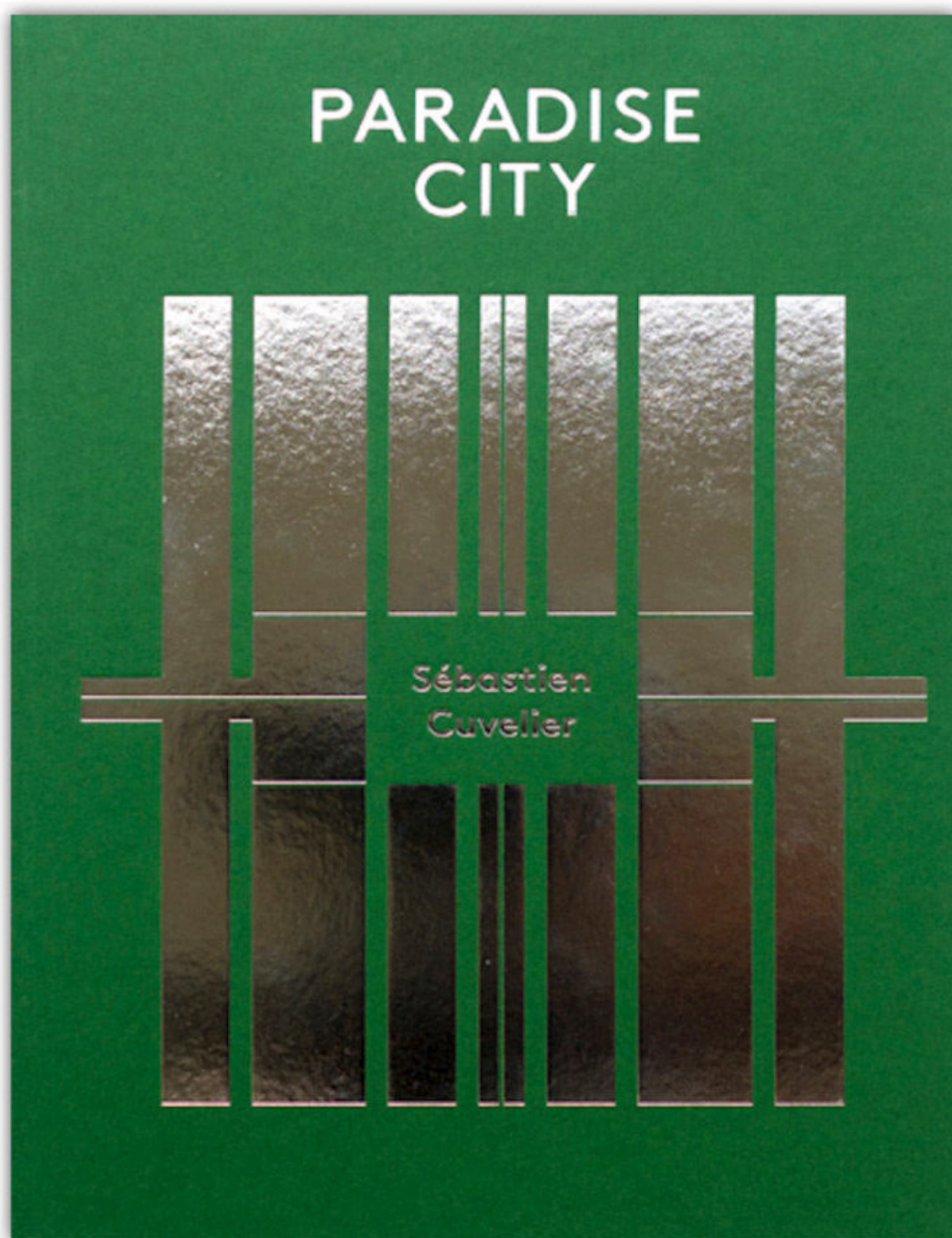
Unperson: Portraits of North Korean Defectors Tim Franco

Unperson is one of the first photo books of North Korean Defectors. The 15 intimate portraits and the stories of the brave people who decided to take that chance to flee to South Korea. The road to South Korea is dangerous and can take years with the many different borders of Mongolia, Laos, Thailand, and China. The people fleeing are filled with the fear of being arrested and sent back to labour camps. Once they arrive in South Korea, they often struggle to find a new identity, lost between their North Korean past and South Korean future.



Afghanistan: Chronotopia Simon Norfolk

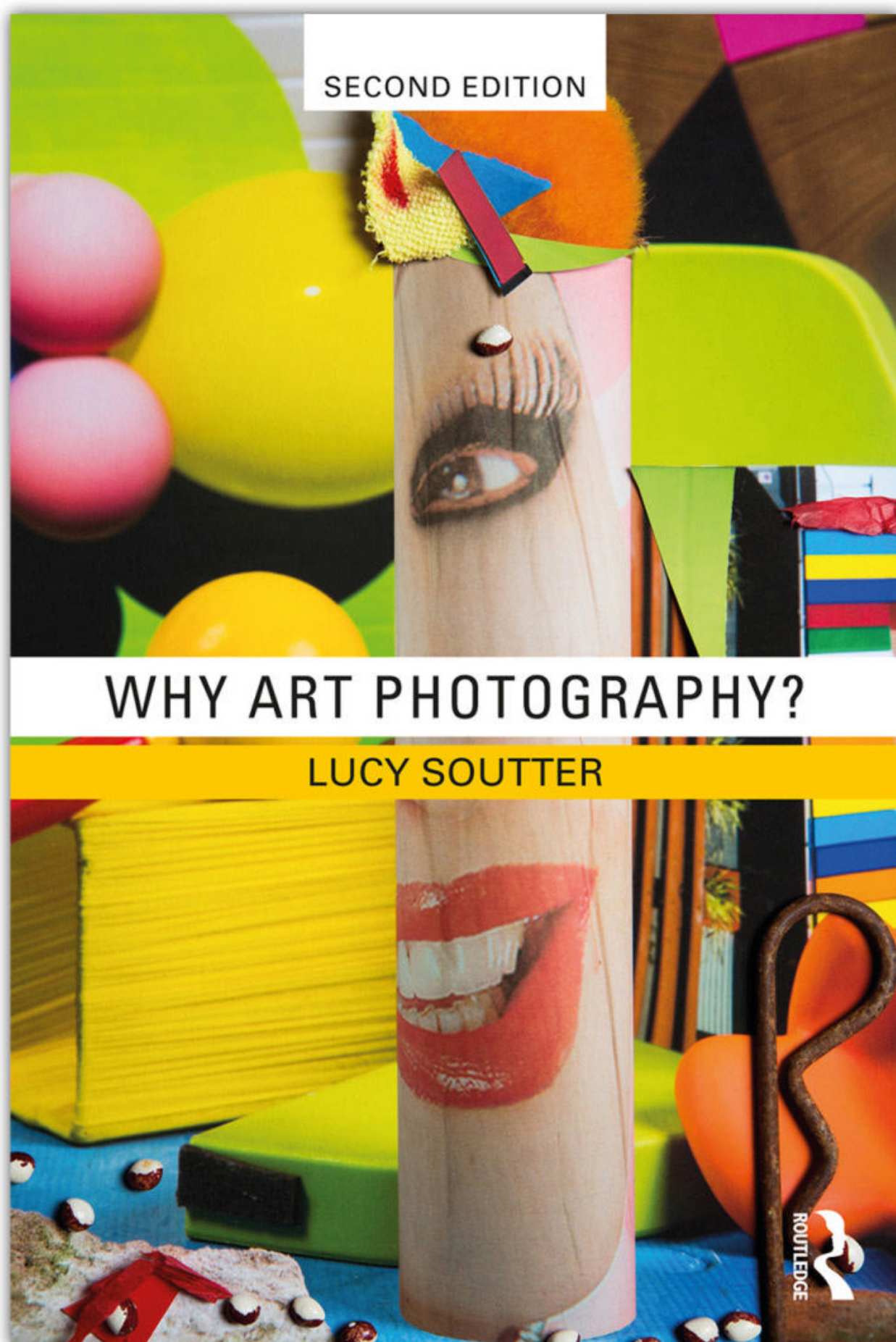
Afghanistan has been ravaged by war for more than twenty years; the Soviet Union, the Mujaheddin, the Taliban and the United States have all played their part. Norfolk's powerfully beautiful images reveal utter devastation on a vast and overwhelming scale. Afghanistan is unique, utterly unlike any other war-ravaged landscape. In Bosnia, Dresden or the Somme, for example, the devastation appears to have taken place within one period, inflicted by a small gamut of weaponry. However, the sheer length of the war in Afghanistan, now in its 24th year, means the ruins have a bizarre layering; different moments of destruction lying like sedimentary strata on top of each other.



Paradise City Sébastien Cuvelier

Paradise City follows Sébastien Cuvelier's search through both the contemporary and ancient landscapes of Iran to locate an elusive, dreamlike version of paradise.

Paradise City is a personal search through both the contemporary and ancient landscapes of Iran to locate an elusive, dreamlike version of paradise. My journeys to Iran were inspired by a manuscript written on my late uncle's journey to Persepolis nearly 50 years ago.



Why Art Photography? Lucy Soutter

The second edition of Why Art Photography? is an updated, expanded introduction to the ideas behind today's striking photographic images.

Lively, accessible discussions of key issues such as ambiguity, objectivity, fiction, authenticity, and photography's expanding field are supplemented with new material around timely topics such as globalization, selfie culture, and photographers' use of advanced digital technologies, including CGI and virtual reality.

The new edition includes: an expanded introduction, extended chapters featuring emerging trends, a larger selection of images, including new color images, an improved and expanded bibliography.

Narrative Portraits

Highlights of Artdoc Exhibition

Portraits show, in a subjective way, how the photographer sees the person he photographed. But portraits can also contain an imagined story. In that case, the portrait is a self-expression of the photographer. The person in the image is a narrative object in the photographer's story, as an actor in a movie set. The photographer projects his own story onto his model as a mirror. With a portrait, the photographer reveals his personal past, view of the world or most profound emotions. This exhibition shows *Narrative Portraits* of creative photographers from all around the world.





© Jorge Mónaco | Dissident Bodies, Gino



© Clare Marie Bailey | Parallel Lives



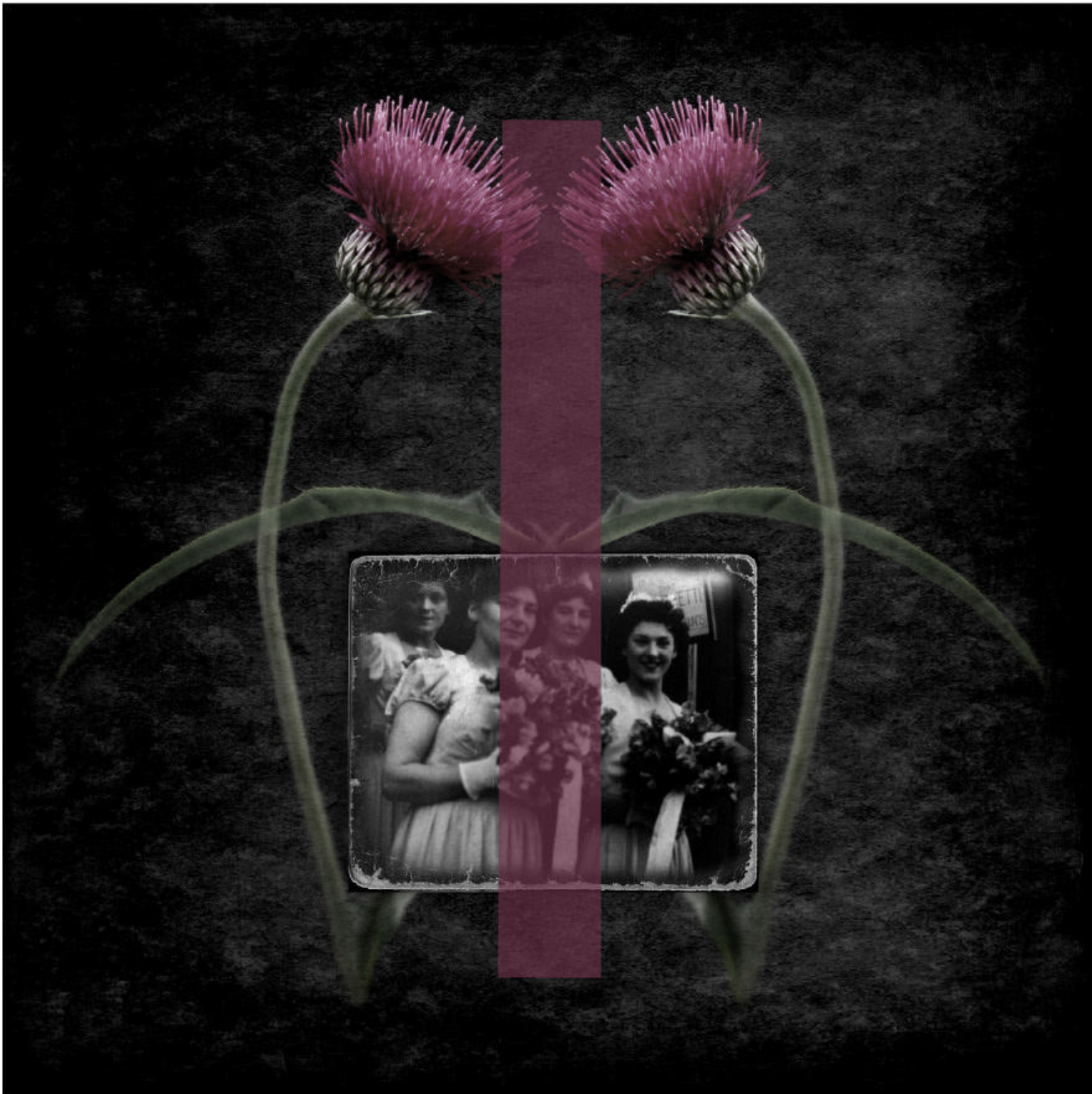
© Raphaël Lorand | Dreamland



© Gerasimos Platanas | Platanas Self Portraits



© Janne Svit & Merete Haseth | Dog Days



© Maura Jamieson | Derivations



© Rogério Vieira | We are all targets here



© Nanouk Prins | Empty Forest



© Sandra Ramos Casasampera | Mimesis



© Max Cabello Orcasitas

Mass graves in the Andes

Max Cabello Orcasitas

In the 80s, Peru was the stage of a years-long battle between the government and the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*), a communist guerrilla movement wanting to overthrow the government. Especially in the mountainous Ayacucho Region, in the south-central Andes, many battles were fought. Peruvian photojournalist Max Cabello Orcasitas read the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and decided to photograph in Chungui, resulting in an emotive series depicting the grief of the native people of the highlands of Peru.



© Max Cabello Orcasitas

“

Of the national total of 69,000 victims, calculations conclude that 26,000 deaths, more than 40%, occurred in this region.



When we think of wars, we mostly come up with the Second World War, the Vietnam War, the Iraq War, and recently the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Not often do we think of the battles of the Peruvian Shining Path group, but for Peruvians, it is a hardly healing scar of their history. In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, produced in 2003, abuses of human rights were investigated. One chapter, entitled *Representative Stories of Violence*, deals with the distant district Chungui. Max Cabello Orcasitas read the harsh texts and found out that there were no photographs of that part of their history.

“I am not sure if there are images of Chungui of those violent times. In 2003 there was a great photographic exhibition called Yuyanapaq, which was a curatorial effort to construct a visual account of the conflict. However, despite its vastness, it did not include images of the Chungui, except for an anthropological book based on testimonies and drawings about the massacres of Chungui. Some documentaries refer to episodes of torture and women raped by the military. But that happened in a period of democratic opening. This did not happen in either the 80s or the 90s during the decade of Alberto Fujimori’s government.”

The reason Cabello Orcasitas wanted to photograph in Ayacucho was that this was the region with the highest concentration of deaths and disappearances, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. “Of the national total of 69,000 victims, calculations conclude that 26,000 deaths, more than 40%, occurred in this region.”

Traumas from the past

People in Ayacucho still suffer from many traumas at an individual psychological level and a collective level. “You could say that there are different memories: the memory of the victims is different from those who did not suffer it. And there are also denialist memories. There were small populated centres that got protection from the armed forces. Other villages had to live with the suspicion of being members of the Shining Path. Those people lived between two fires, which is still felt today. Even 30 years later, human rights and justice defenders are stigmatized as allies of the Shining Path. Those who accuse are deniers of the massacres of the armed forces. Despite this, little progress has been made at a slow pace in state policy to reconcile the victims of the internal armed conflict, in addition to the fact that there is still no justice.”





DROS CUS



© Max Cabello Orcasitas



© Max Cabello Orcasitas

Peruvian Srebrenica

When Max Cabello Orcasitas travelled to Chungui for the first time, in 2009-2010, he was interested in who the survivors were. “It seemed to me a kind of Peruvian Srebrenica, a situation of a population that was almost exterminated by different parties: the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the Army forces, as well as local self-defence committees (local militias). After the war, there was a repopulation. I wanted to see this through small events: parties, marriages and christenings, games. I did not want to start head-on with the testimonies of abuse. I wanted to gain trust naturally. I talked and listened to those who wanted to speak and, of course, to those who wanted to share their testimonies. I wanted to start with everyday events and not necessarily those associated with past violence.”

The exhumation processes in the area began in 2011 and 2012, years in which he could not travel to Chungui, but in 2013 he returned to photograph it. “In several cases, the orphans of the murdered participated in the identification of the skeletal remains of the victims, as well as in the exhumations. Many were children or adolescents when the massacres occurred.”

Uncle

There are many massacres or murders, especially in Chungui and Oronccoy, that have not been of journalistic relevance to the Peruvian media for a long time. “There is a need for survivors to make their grief and the current conditions in which they live visible. There is a lot of indifference

of political parties. The rural populations are impoverished farmers with little access to roads, without the capacity to sell agricultural products to the cities. So, they have little influence on the media coverage.”

A personal relation to the events made the suffering come close. “I had an uncle who fled from Ayacucho because his wife, who is my aunt, was murdered. He fled to Lima because he was threatened with death by members of the Shining Path. This happened in 1985 when I was ten years old. He had to leave his home and work in Ayacucho. He never got used to it in Lima. He lived two or three years in my house. He couldn’t get over the episode of violence. He was too affected by the abrupt change of coming to Lima. He was a Quechua speaker, so he suffered different episodes of discrimination in Lima.”

Prayer

The scene occurred after an initial refusal by the villagers to allow the exhumation. They did not want the skeletal remains to be taken to laboratories located 230 kilometres away. Cabello Orcasitas: “They demanded that the remains, once extracted, remain in the village and be examined closely. After imposing these conditions, the exhumation was allowed and that moment of the men kneeling praying corresponds to the beginning of the exhumations. At some point, I even thought that they would not let me take photos, but no; they (the villagers) wanted their story to be told and recorded.”

Taking sides as a photojournalist is a matter of fact for Max Cabello Orcasitas. “People do not want to talk about the period of violence or its aftermath in Peru. It is committed to oblivion or to support a single type of victorious and insulting memory towards the victims of the armed conflict as well as the process of searching for the disappeared. What I do is see and show the scars or consequences of that violence.” Cabello Orcasitas came so often to the region that he knew the forensic anthropologists from previous exhumations. “Can you imagine following the exhumations more than five times? I made more than twenty trips to the small towns of Chungui and Oronccoy because history interests me. It is a non-closed chapter in the history of Peru.”

Martín Chambi

Max Cabello Orcasitas desaturates his images slightly but, at the same time, there

is contrast in his images to achieve a sober style, creating a visual correspondence with the dark and mournful subject matter. “I don’t use flash, just ambient light. I liked the kind of photos made by Rodchenko. But years later, I saw that my photos were even soberer and more character-centred. I usually pay a lot of attention to the composition of the elements in the frame, even if it doesn’t seem so. Usually, it takes a long time to take photos. Before I start to photograph, I always explain why I am taking pictures.” Even though he does not make portraits, Cabello Orcasitas is inspired by Peruvian photographers like Martín Chambi. “There is a generation of Peruvian photographers from the late 90s that I liked: Jaime Razuri, Mayu Mohanna, Nancy Chappel, Cecilia Larrabure, Veronica Salem, Daniel Pajuelo, and Esteban Feliz, to name a few. I am also influenced by the Magnum photographers Bruce Davidson and Josef Koudelka.”





© Max Cabello Orcasitas

About

Max Cabello is a Peruvian photographer who lives and works in Peru. He is a founding member of the Supayfotos collective. From 1999 to the present, he has worked as a photographer for various publications Peruvian: OJO, Correo, SOMOS. He has won the national award on the III Eugene Courret documentary photography competition; won the "Nuestra Mirada Identity" POYI Latin America; the second place in the Daily Life category POYI LA, both in 2011. His series "Circus of Neighborhood" and "Los Ingobernables" have been nominated for the Prize of Photojournalism "Ciudad de Gijón" 2006 and 2007. Max Cabello Orcasitas was one of the photographers of the Master Award Shortlist World Report Award 2021, documenting Humanity, of the Festival of Ethical Photography.



“There is a need for survivors to make their grief and the current conditions in which they live visible.

Now is Always

Vaune Trachtman





Now is Always begun during the Great Depression when my father, Joseph Harold Trachtman (1914-1971), shot a few rolls of film near his father's drugstore in Centre City, Philadelphia. Nearly 90 years later, my sister found the negatives and gave them to me. Working from my father's original negatives, I've combined the people from his neighbourhood with my own images, many of which were shot from windows and moving vehicles. *Now is Always* is our collaboration across time.

My father lived in Philly his entire life, and his images of friends and neighbours are firmly rooted in one place and time: the corner of 19th and Girard during the Depression. On the other hand, my images are much less rooted, probably because I was pretty much on my own after my parents died—my father when I was five and my mother when I was 15. My most vivid memory of my father was his legs because that's about all I was tall enough to see of him. His most vivid memory of me? I will never know. And yet, in this work, we manage to speak. After my parents died, I was rarely in one place for very long. Often the view out a car or train window felt more like home than wherever I was living. Over time, I've developed a kinship with

blurred bridges and highways, trestles and roofs, the husks of industrial towns racing by at two or three in the morning. In this work, my father's life becomes part of these landscapes—our shared and evanescent homes.

There is obviously a personal aspect to *Now is Always*, but I want the work to be more expansive than a dialogue between the father I didn't know and the daughter he knew only as a child. With my series *Now is Always*, I created a feeling of collapsed-yet-expanded time. I want to see what my father saw, and I want him to see what I see. But I also want the viewer to look at the past, and I want the past to look right back; I want the viewer and the subject to each feel the gaze of the other. And by combining images taken almost a century apart, I also want to seamlessly integrate layers of technology and image-making history: his 1930's point-and-shoot, my iPhone, his silver-gelatin negatives, my Photoshop files, our shared sunlight and water, the traditions of ink, elbow grease, and an intaglio press. *Now is Always* is supported by a grant from the Vermont Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the Tusen Takk Foundation.



© Vaune Trachtman | Now is Always



© Vaune Trachtman | Now is Always



**About**

Vaune Trachtman (Brattleboro, Vermont) is a photographer and printmaker whose work honours the methods and tone of historical processes but without the toxic chemicals. Formerly a master printer of silver gelatin prints and asphalt-based photogravures, she began to feel that those processes were compromising her immune system. So she now makes gravures with little more than light and water. Her images explore the evanescence of dreams and memory— a “fleeting, wondrous, sacred habitation” (Collier Brown, *Od Review*). Vaune was among the winners of the 2018 Alternative Processes National Competition, and she was shortlisted for the 2019 International Hariban Prize. Her newest series, *Now is Always*, will be shown at The Griffin Museum of Photography in summer 2021, and she is a semi-finalist for The Print Center’s 95th ANNUAL International Competition. It is supported by a grant from the Vermont Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Tusen Takk Foundation. Vaune was born in Philadelphia and received her M.A. from NYU and the International Center of Photography.



Portraits of North Korean Defectors

Tim Franco

For North Koreans, it is virtually impossible to escape the militant and brutal regime, but still, few people manage to cross the frozen river along the border with China. Most defectors finally end up in the neighbour country South Korea, after a long and hazardous journey across China and other countries. Photographer Tim Franco, based in Seoul, wrote down their chilling stories and made portraits of the ‘unpersons’.

The North Korea subject matter is vast and inexhaustible. More and more photographers have found their way to North Korea to photograph the orchestrated 'daily life' of the country, mainly in the capital Pyongyang. Some photographers get access to more areas than the average tourists' are able to highlight, like Carl the Keyser in his book *DPR Korea Grand Tour*. Others manage to highly stylize the vision of the most forbidden country in the world, like Eddo Hartmann in his book *North Korea*. But not Tim Franco. He realizes that it was not easy to come up with another version of new, never before seen images of the journalist-locked country.

Defectors in Seoul

Living in Seoul and hearing about the many defectors living there, Franco decided to portrait them and listen to their blood-curdling stories. "To start with, I found the theme of North Korea too easy, so for a long time, I disregarded it. But in Seoul, I lived 60 kilometres from the border, and I knew close to nothing about North Korea, except what you see on the news. So, I wanted to know more about this utterly locked country.

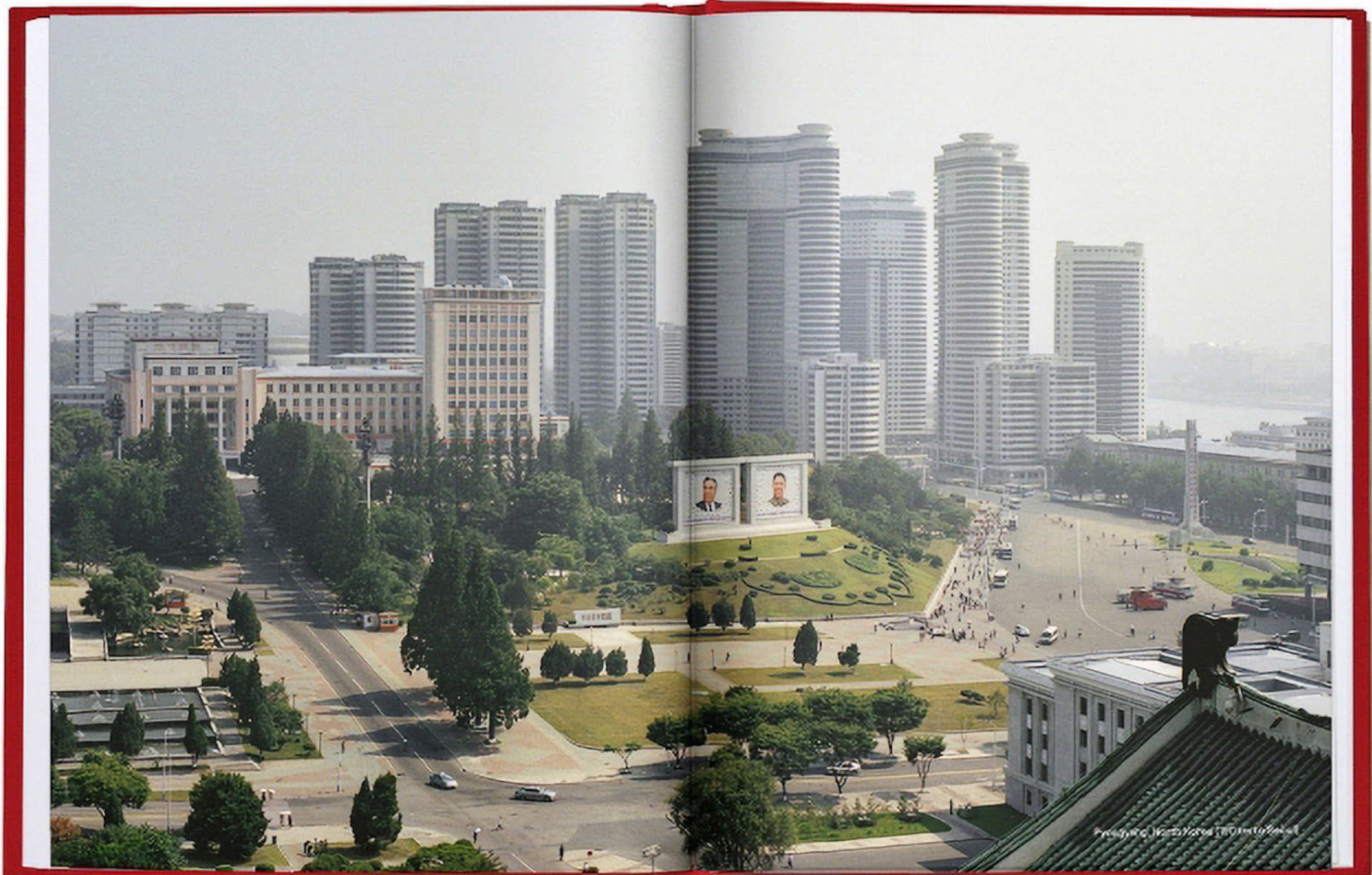
The obvious way was to visit North Korea, but most people who go there take the same obligatory pictures. Apart from that, some good projects have been done there, already like that of the Dutch photographer Eddo Hartmann. I could not see how I could do things differently."

When Tim Franco talked to journalists in Seoul, he realized that there was a community of defectors of North Koreans there. After conducting an investigation, he was able to speak to some of them. "They could tell the stories that I was looking for. But it is hard to find defectors who agree to talk and tell their stories and to have their photographs taken. If you want to go to their house, it is almost impossible. Many of them still live in fear."

The first people he interviewed were regular defectors who had already talked to the media. "I wanted to meet defectors from different backgrounds and different stories; I wanted to talk to people from poor backgrounds but also people from the elite class. And I wanted to hear the different reasons for defecting. I also needed to create a safe environment for them to make the portrait and have an interview. Happily, I found a press centre in downtown Seoul."



It is hard to find defectors who agree to talk and tell their stories and to have their photographs taken.



© Tim Franco | Unperson

SONG BYEOK

In our popular culture, painting is often considered one of the purest forms of art but when Song Byeok started his career in North Korea, being a painter was the lowest position that existed inside the Hwanghae do steel factory. He was assigned to the propaganda unit. His artistic freedom was nonexistent — every guideline was dictated by the Workers' Party and the slightest hint of creativity would see you sent to prison immediately. It was the late 90s and North Korea was still going through one of its most destructive famines. On a propaganda poster painter's salary Song Byeok was not even able to get enough to eat so he and his father decided to escape to China in order to survive. But their attempt was ill-fated. The crossing of the Tumen River border to China took a turn for the worse as they underestimated the strength of the current. Song Byeok's father drowned in the river and he himself ended back on the North Korean shore only to fall straight into the arms of the border guards. After 6 months spent in a prison camp he was so weak that he was released only to turn the guard's hands of having to deal with his dead body.

Against all odds, he managed to survive. His second attempt was successful. He crossed the Tumen River and a full year later made it through China to South Korea. After his arrival in South Korea, Song Byeok finally found the freedom of expression he had so desired. Using his background in North Korean propaganda, he used a pop art approach to paint a satire of North Korean luxury. Despite having left the regime far behind, he still feels defined by his identity as a defector. He dreams that one day his work can also be recognized as art, free as he is of borders and political stigma.



© Tim Franco | Unperson

Many defectors leave together with their families because they know it will be terrible for their family if they leave them behind. There are more defectors in China than in South Korea. “Defecting to China is very hard and dangerous, but it is not viewed by North Korea as bad as defecting to South Korea, which is the ultimate enemy of the North. That is why many defectors make their families believe they are in China. That was why many people don’t want to speak to the press. People that have no family back in the North are less afraid, and they allowed me to photograph them.”

Stories

Tim Franco interviewed all the twenty-five defectors he photographed. “In writing their stories, I focused on different themes, like how they escaped or how their life was in North Korea or how they had to adjust to the South-Korean lifestyle.” It was obviously not possible to fact-check or verify their stories. “In South Korea, it is customary to pay the people you interview, so normally people tend to exaggerate or change some parts of their stories. I was cautious about that, and I refused to pay them. In some cases, I found the stories, according to my research, a little bit too unbelievable to put in my book. And some people told me things that they did not want to be on the record.”

Polaroid negatives

The portraits are made on Polaroids Fuji peel apart, which give them a worn and old look. Tim Franco explains: “The Fuji is - unlike the Polaroid 55 - not made to preserve the negative, but if you carefully wash the negative, you can use it and scan it. But you are not supposed to do that. The concept of my approach was that my use

of the negative reflected their situation. Because I was using the negative ‘illegally,’ it was a way to express the fact that they were not supposed to be in South Korea. If you do this process of cleansing the negatives, you get scratches and chemical spills. That was a way to express the fact that they fled from the North to the South, which is a long and complicated process. So that scratchy, dirty, imperfect negative was their story.”

Long distances

When Franco completed all the interviews, he had a better understanding of how they escaped. “Most of the defectors first go to China, and after that, they have to find a country that recognizes their refugee status, like Thailand and Mongolia. It is extremely difficult for them to travel from China to one of these countries. They all want to reach South Korea, but they have to travel far to reach their neighbour country. In China, the police are looking for them, so they get easily arrested and sent back to North Korea, where they end up in a labour camp. I, therefore, made landscape pictures, and underneath the photos, I put the distance to their final destination. I started in North Korea, and the distance was often only 60 or 100 km away from Seoul. In Bangkok, it was more than 3000 km. I especially photographed the border river between North Korea and China and the border between China and Laos and Mongolia. To reach Mongolia, you have to cross the Gobi Desert, which is extremely dry and dangerous. When you open the book, it starts with landscape pictures of North Korea because that was where I wanted to start from. At the end, you see landscape photos of South Korea.”



사
옹
위



의
자립적도대강화를 영원한생명선으로



자력갱생을반영의모범으로들어주고
비료생산에서 일대양양을

자립적도대강화를 영원한생명선으로





About

Tim Franco is a French Polish photographer born in Paris in 1982. Formerly based in Shanghai for a decade, he documents the incredible urbanisation of China and its social impacts. This body of work was published as his first Monography *Metamorphosis* - the conclusion of five years of work about the rural migration in the fastest urbanising city in the world: Chongqing. It was during this time that Tim developed his style of working mostly on analog camera and trying to bring a minimalist aesthetic to documentary photography. In 2016, Tim Franco moved to South Korea where he started working on a long term project about North Korean defectors. He has been collaborating - amongst others - with Time Magazine, Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, National Geographic, Le Monde, Geo and 6 Mois.



“They all want to reach South Korea, but they have to travel far to reach their neighbour country.



I SEE ONLY HUMANS
NOT HUMANITY

DAPPY

JOSH

WE MET IN TURKEY
AND WE TRAVELLING
BOTH SINCE 2 YRS

Take me to Germany

Charlotte Schmitz

“I see only humans, not humanity.” This text is written on a pale polaroid photo of two young men dressed in warm jackets, caps on their heads, staring with a mixture of hope and despair at the camera. Underneath the image, on the white area that is usually a part of a Polaroid, we read: “We met in Turkey and we travelling both about 2 years.” On their jackets, we read the names of the boys: Dappy and Josh. The photo was taken in November 2015 in Eidomeni, at the Greek/North Macedonian border. German photographer Charlotte Schmitz took this Polaroid for her compelling series about refugees *Take me to Germany*.

From 2015 to 2016, Charlotte Schmitz photographed the Polaroid series, which chronicles the dangerous journey of asylum seekers from Turkey to Europe. By letting the refugees write on the photos, she turned them into co-authors of the project. Schmitz explains her method: “Mainstream coverage often reinforces a stereotypical view of asylum seekers and barely involves them telling their own stories. So, I encouraged the people I photographed to write on their polaroids, thereby creating their own narratives – their stories reveal a nuanced, human, relatable depth to them.” Many people fleeing war and persecution take the dangerous sea route from Turkey to Greece, searching for a new home in Europe. Germany took a leading role in coordinating the EU’s response to the humanitarian crisis, creating a welcome culture. But this positive attitude did not last long, Schmitz discovered. “The phrase ‘I see only Humans, not Humanity’ is a painful, poignant statement. It perfectly describes the aftermath of the EU-Turkey deal in Greece. Asylum seekers are still living under horrible conditions and are stuck in legal limbo on the islands or in other places of the Balkans.”

Participation

When Charlotte Schmitz travelled to Istanbul in 2014, she was suddenly much closer to the civil war in Syria, where she met many people who took the dangerous journey towards Europe. “When I started with my project, I immediately knew that the people I would photograph should tell their own stories. I made the images in collaboration with the subjects. They became part of the creative process by writing their stories on their polaroids. Participatory photography has been a foundational method of my art ever since, as it minimizes a possible biased structure as a result of the regular photographic process. Participation of the subjects creates a deeper and more complex understanding of the people involved.”

Media misrepresentation

It was necessary for Schmitz to bring social issues to the public debate by presenting a new perspective, thereby raising awareness and hopefully engaging a wider audience. “I often work on women and migration-related issues, focusing on individualism, the private space, and intimacy—using photography to take an intimate look into people’s lives and places. One of my



Mainstream coverage often reinforces a stereotypical view of asylum seekers and barely involves them telling their own stories.



افغانستانی نخلان

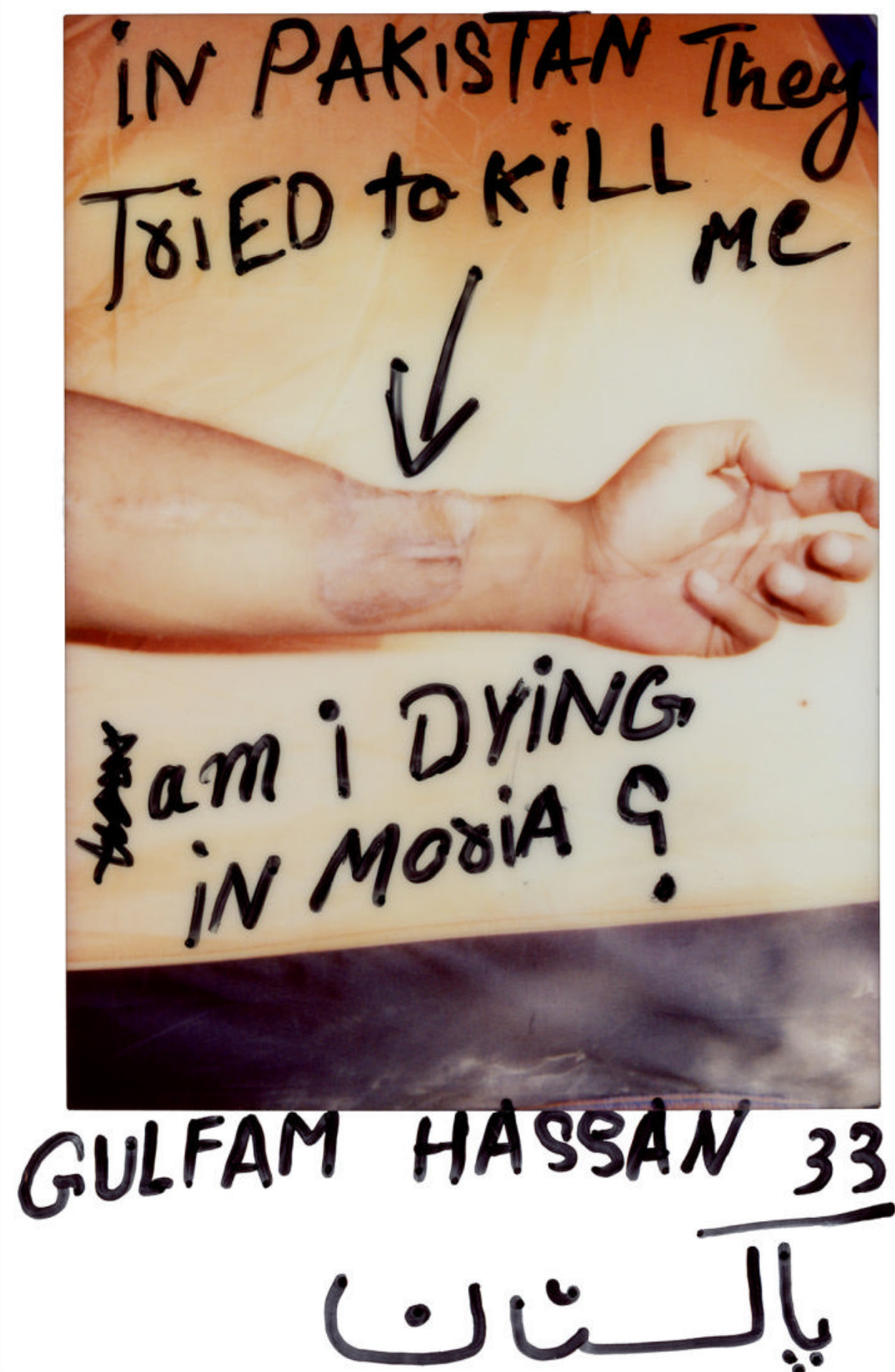
حبي لولدي والعيش معه



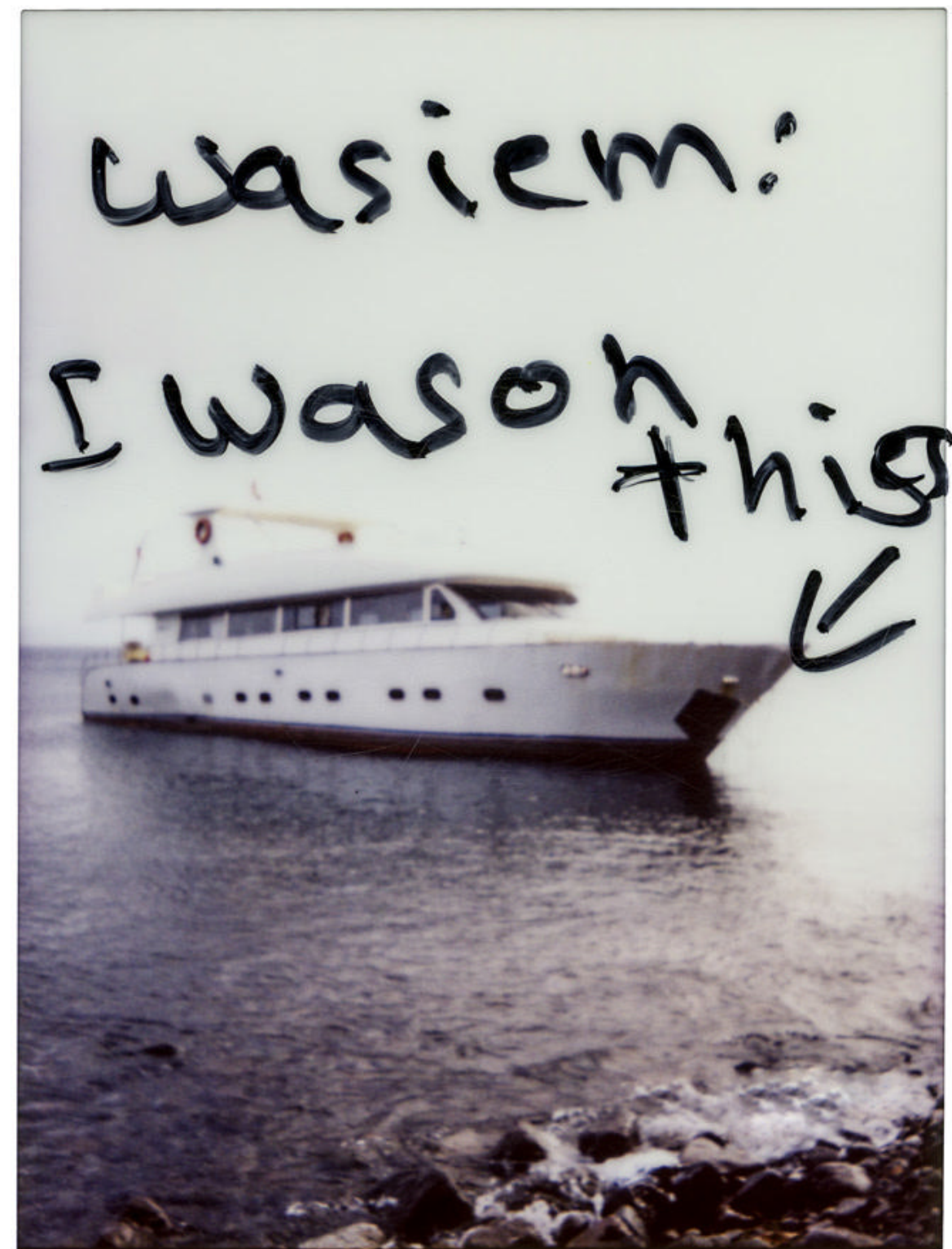
© Charlotte Schmitz | Take me to Germany, »My love to my son and to live with him made me risk my life, because I prevented him from the death in Syria.« Izmir, Turkey, January, 2016

دفعني لافطار برومي
نظمتي مع نفسي انفسه

© Charlotte Schmitz | Take me to Germany, »In Pakistan they tried to kill me. Am I dying in Moria? Gulfam Hassan, 33« Lesvos, Greece, October 2016



© Charlotte Schmitz | Take me to Germany, »»Wasielem: I was on this«« Lesvos, Greece November 2015



fundamental motivations for being a photographer and an artist is that women are misrepresented and underrepresented in almost all forms of media. Art has always been the medium to carry progressive values and social themes, so I prioritize focusing on gender, sexuality, and women's situation in many of my projects. I also prefer showing what we have in common as individuals, which is more important than what divides us."

Building trust and intimacy

Working with Polaroid has particular advantages for Schmitz because the process breeds intimacy between her and the people involved. "Polaroid allows the people to control their photograph and even change

the outcome. Photographing with a polaroid builds trust, which is especially important when working in difficult environments or in places where photography is usually not allowed, like in the brothel La Puente, where I photographed for many years. I also love working with Polaroid because I don't focus on taking too many pictures but rather on being present with the people."

Moria

Every time the photographer was on the Greek Island Lesvos meant a challenging experience. "I spent quite some time in Moria, which was Europe's biggest refugee camp before it burned down in 2020. The aftermath of the EU-Turkey deal in Greece is horrible. It brought both physical



© Charlotte Schmitz | Take me to Germany, Lesbos, Greece, November 2015

and mental damage and also shakes the foundations upon which the European idea was built. Seeing the consequences of migration policies on the lives of those at the centre of it is extremely difficult.”

Innovative approaches

All Charlotte Schmitz’s projects have a political character, naturally as a result of the issues on which she is working. She often documents what happens behind the scenes of disenfranchised communities. “As a documentary photographer, I have the responsibility to rethink narratives and contribute to new documentary approaches in photojournalism by applying participatory photography. This way of working is not widespread yet, especially not in the journalistic field, but I am determined to make a change. I do believe

that we need innovative approaches to debate contemporary issues and challenge stereotyped perceptions, thereby minimizing hierarchies and any form of unbalanced power structures that the traditional storytelling process generates.”

Social art

Art with a social or cultural impact inspires her. “Looking around, from increasing social injustice to climate change, we have to make a change now, be political, and inspire others to join. One year ago, I initiated a global photography collective of several hundred women and non-binary photographers, who have come together to create a network for connection, creativity, and support while advocating for an equitable photography society. Working alongside those women daily inspires me.”



© Charlotte Schmitz | Take me to Germany, Graves in Izmir, Turkey. January, 2016

About

Charlotte Schmitz is a documentary photographer using participatory art to subvert the traditional documentary approach, working on innovative storytelling. She grew up in the Danish Minority in Germany and studied documentary photography at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Hanover. Charlotte co founded Friendzone.Studio (friendzone.studio) developing creative communication for projects with social and cultural impact. Her work is being published in international media outlets such as The Washington Post and der Spiegel and the British Journal of Photography selected her as »Ones To Watch 2019«. She is the first recipient of the »FotoEvidence W Award« with her work La Puente, published in 2019. She has had solo exhibitions in the United States, Turkey, Austria and Japan. In Mid March 2020 she founded The Journal (@thejournal_collective), a global photography collective of several hundred women and non-binary photographers who have come together to push for an equitable photography society. Charlotte speaks six languages, and is currently based at the German Danish border.



Sarah 24
2015 Syria

“Polaroid allows the people to control their photograph and even change the outcome.

After Echo

Daphne Kotsiani





© Daphne Kotsiani | After Echo



During the pandemic, I needed introspection and reflection. I felt the urge to explore the possibilities for something I could relate to, which could deeply move me, evoking memories and emotions. I wanted to create a visual and poetic territory that would link reality and a universe where a harmonious correlation could be achieved between the fantasy of an escape and the mysteries of dreams. My series *After Echo* depicts an inner journey that resonates with my silent encounters with nature and my visited places over the last ten years. It's an attempt to convey a sense of longing for timeless beauty, to portray the essence

behind the apparent and the perpetual presence of the sublime. *After Echo* constitutes an emotional response to the proportions of space and time. Through conversations of fragments of memory, experiences are reconstructed, emotions are transformed and create the silent context that seems to be the hope for the embrace between the past and the future. The significant places that magnetize me in this work are honest testimonies of achieving a goal, which is nothing more than pursuing inner peace as a permanent state. Ultimately, at its core, it's about the awareness of one being present and the reconnection of oneself with the whole.







© Daphne Kotsiani | After Echo

About

Daphne Kotsiani was born and raised in Thessaloniki, Greece, and studied classical piano. She works as a musician, participating in numerous concerts and festivals in contemporary classical, experimental and jazz-improvised music. Since 2010, she uses photography as her primary medium of expression and exploration. Daphne Kotsiani has attended seminars at "Stereosis" School of Photography in Thessaloniki and photography master-classes by Haris Kakarouhas, Michael Ackerman and Ilias Georgiadis. She has participated in solo and group exhibitions, and she has published two photo books: "Iceland-In the Land of Ice and Fire" (2011) and "Beyond The Arctic Circle" (2016).



© Sébastien Cuvelier | Paradise City

Where is Paradise?

Sébastien Cuvelier

Living through the Coronavirus crisis, the climate change emergency and economic uncertainties, the concept of paradise is more important than ever. Many people around the world are looking for a better and safer place to live. But where is paradise?

Belgian photographer Sébastien Cuvelier found a suburb called

Paradise City in the North-East of Tehran. Paradise City was not paradise, looking more like a desolated habitat on Mars, but metaphorically it represented the universal desire for people to escape their lives. The book *Paradise City* illustrates metaphors for the utopian urge of us all.

Sébastien Cuvelier did not start with the concept of paradise as a theme. Instead, it evolved organically as he was inspired by his uncle's travels to Iran in the early 1970s, in search of the archaeological site *Persepolis* where the remnants of the Achaemenid Empire are preserved. In the journals his uncle wrote about his hippie-like travels with his Volkswagen van. Cuvelier knew about the printed version of the journals and intended to follow his uncle to Iran for years. "The idea had been lingering in my head for many years, but I always postponed it because I thought it wasn't the right time. My uncle's journal kick-started my journey and made me want to see Iran with my own eyes. It felt like an opportunity to create something interesting there. At the same time, Iran attracts a large number of people and photographers and I didn't want to be one of the many photographers to follow the same beaten trails. I asked myself what my justification was: was it relevant to photograph in Iran?"

Walled Garden

During his first trip, Cuvelier had no idea that his journey would lead to a concept of paradise, but once he saw the outskirts of Tehran he knew immediately what he was looking for. "At the end of my first trip I stumbled upon a place called Paradise City with high flats in the middle of brown and arid mountains. It was like they were standing on Mars.

I wondered why it was called Paradise City and I started looking for clues about the origins of the name. I realised the word 'Paradise' comes from old Persian, meaning 'walled garden'. I noticed people in Iran sometimes used the word paradise, and found out that it was often used as a metaphor for Iranian people even though they didn't consciously see it that way. The concept is inherently Iranian; many people talked to me about their desire to escape the country and go somewhere else, or to find another way of living in their own country, so as to escape in their minds. Many were looking for something else. Many were looking for an ideal place to live, which can be defined by anybody in their own way. If you look at the religious concepts of paradise in the Bible, the Koran or the Torah, you see that paradise is always a garden. Then I realised that Iran in itself is a walled garden; Iran is a magnificent country with a huge wall surrounding it. My uncle wanted to go to Persepolis, which was a Paradise city during ancient times, but also for himself. So, I came to realise that paradise is a universal story. We all dream of an ideal place and that is the essence of all my work. Many people I met in Iran wanted to go somewhere else. It was a basic and universal feeling of melancholy. And now I could put a name on it." Cuvelier could link his own journey to his uncle's travels because he was essentially looking for the same thing.





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Welcome to Paradise

After Cuvelier took the photographs of Paradise City, he started to look everywhere for this concept of paradise. He saw the word paradise on t-shirts and in shopping malls, and photographed it many times. But not wanting to make a gimmick of it, he decided to only include one of these images in the book. He realised that many young Iranians were looking for a way to escape the country, either physically by emigration, or spiritually by creating new experiences. “I went to a beach in the south of Iran, where artists and hippies go to live freely. When I arrived, there was a guy with a moustache who came to me, hugged me,

and said: *“My friend, welcome to paradise!”* I understood that the concept of paradise is like a mirage; it does not really exist. But you can interpret it any way you want. The word is open to many interpretations.” You could say that the idea of paradise is more important than ever. Now we are all trying to invent a new world. “If you look at humanity as a whole, historically there have always been events that forced people to see and construct the future in a different way. In Iran, there have been many drastic changes in the past such as the revolution in 1979. Most of the inhabitants of Iran are young and have no memory of the life before the revolution. They were born in a



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country where they don't feel free. When I was in Iran, I had the feeling that something might happen any time. It is a country that is in a grey area, in a moment of time and always subject to change. I don't know what and how things will change but I am sometimes worried when I think of my friends there."

Hijab

Within the project is a photo of a young woman, looking sternly and strongly into the lens. She is placed in an undescriptive patio with rubbish on the floor. We don't know where she is or what she wants to say, but she seems stranded in time.

How does Sébastien Cuvelier see his own enigmatic picture? "I try not to interpret my own photographs too much, leaving open different interpretations people may have on my project. I thought this picture was interesting because I wanted to contradict the general idea people have of Iran. This woman does not wear the hijab on her head, which in itself is already a political statement. The veil is not plain black but very colourful with flowers, which for me depicted the cultural and poetic aspects of Iran. The woman took me to an abandoned Zoroastrian house near Isfahan. For me, it was a dive into the past. The light comes from behind her and literally highlights

her hair, which is completely contradictory of what Islam wants to achieve with women wearing hijabs. Finally, she is surrounded by walls, making her free in her little paradise. I kind of like the mystery of it.” Cuvelier did not want to only use his vision when creating the book and therefore invited the publishing house to come up with their own ideas too. “I wanted a trusted third party to cooperate with me and select images and sequences based on their perception, in a way to take me somewhere I would not have gone to on my own.”

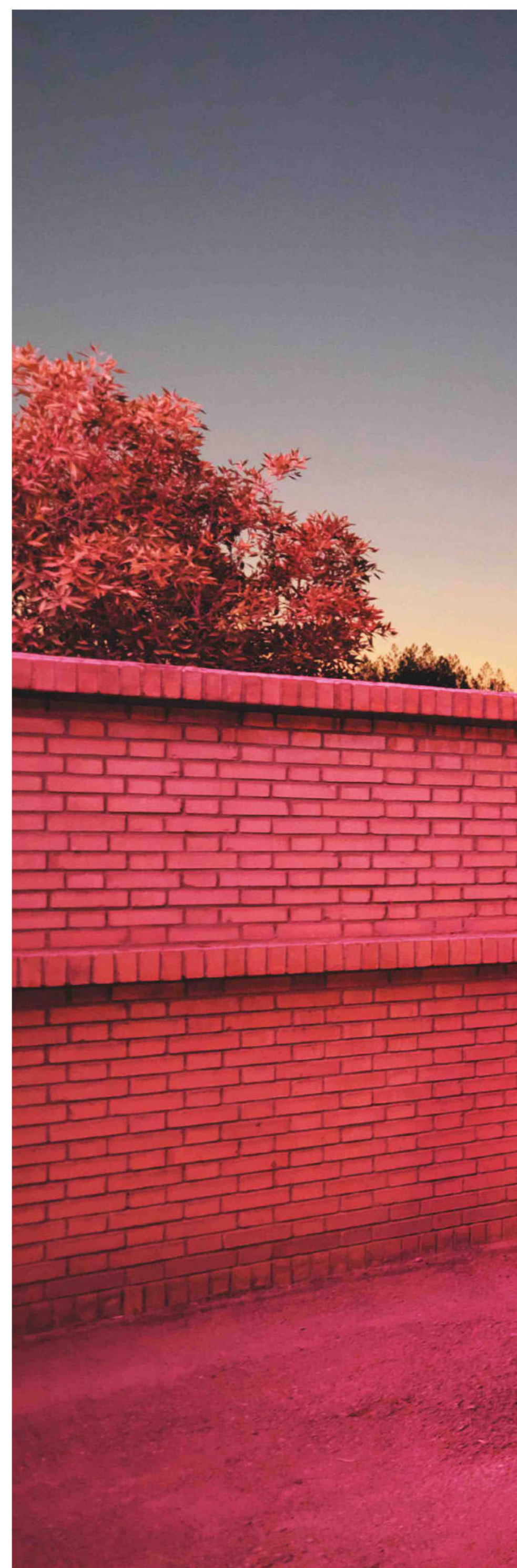
The Pink Picture

Another enigmatic picture of the project, and maybe the most iconic of *Paradise City*, is the photo with a pink-magenta coloured walled courtyard with a palm tree and an iron bench. At first sight the spectator might think this is a photoshopped image, to create a hallucinating effect, but this is by no means true, as Cuvelier explains. “I did not edit anything about that image in Photoshop, or any other picture for that matter. The street behind the wall has a huge billboard which uses a big red neon light. It was

inundating its light onto the scene. When I was walking in the street, I saw the top of the palm tree over the wall and noticed it appeared to be pink. The courtyard was the epitome of what I was looking for. There in front of me was a walled garden, the definition of paradise; it was perfect! It was dry and concrete, but a garden nonetheless. The pink hue made it surreal and very dreamlike. I waited an hour for the sun to set behind the wall, in order to capture a better balance with the dusk.”

Kurds

On one page in the book, we see a photocopy of a newspaper article about the Kurds’ situation. We can read the title of the article that says: More than 12 million Kurds on a terrain of 500,000 km² divided between 5 countries (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and the USSR). Projected on the text is a black and white photo of an unknown Iranian woman without a hijab. Cuvelier explains: “The text behind is an article my uncle found during his research on his trip in 1971. He photocopied this from a newspaper and







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included it in his travel journal. The text talks about the fate of the Kurdish people, an issue which is unfortunately still valid today. The portrait of the women on top of the text works as a metaphor for the censorship of Iran. The text from my uncle would not be publishable in the Iran of today; it would be strictly forbidden, because the Islamic government does not want to acknowledge the situation of the Kurds. I wanted to use the same technique as the government would do, to cover unwanted texts. The picture of the woman comes from a photo album from an Iranian family that I met and is randomly superimposed over the text. The portrait

was taken in the 1970s, around the same time as my uncle's trip. A lot of young Iranians cherish pictures of the time before the revolution when Iran seemed to be much more liberal."

Persepolis

Cuvelier arrived at Persepolis, the site that triggered his endeavour, on his first trip - he went to Iran three times in total, and felt the spirit of his uncle. "That was potentially the most emotional moment for me, even though I never intended to replicate the exact same trip as my uncle. I was no longer thinking about his journal when I was travelling there, but when I arrived at



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Persepolis and I saw that majestic place which had barely changed in fifty years, I could totally imagine him being there. That was emotional. When I went inside the ruins, I recognized the images of my uncle. That is why I wanted to include one of his images of Persepolis in the book.”
Is utopia in Iran a thing of the past, only to exist in the times before the revolution?
“It could be the past and it could be the future. I like to blur the lines between

different areas and time frames, because by definition, dreams and utopias are imaginary. I am now trying to exhibit the project in Iran itself so that the work comes back to where it came from, closing the loop. I am also planning to hold talks and conferences with people and artists, as I am interested to have conversations with them and see if they agree with my point of view or not. I want to know what their opinion on my work is and if they share my vision.”

About

Sébastien Cuvelier is a Belgian photographer (born in 1975) living and working in Luxembourg. His goal is to explore how humans build and live their dreams, fantasies or hopes in search of a sometimes utopian ideal.



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“If you look at the religious concepts of paradise in the Bible, the Koran or the Torah, you see that paradise is always a garden.

“Photography is the art that combines reality and vision, feeling and truth, psychological depth, and political awareness.

- Artdoc Magazine

Artdoc Magazine #3 | 2021

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